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ABSTRACT

Sudanese refugees in Egypt, who settled primarily in Cairo, encounter serious problems, both legal and economic, in accessing education. Refugees are legally barred from work and from sending their children to government schools and, hence, live in a precarious state. Often, such refugees perceive resettlement in a third country as the only remedy to their predicaments as long as war and massive human rights violations in their country continue. The poor state of the economy has seriously undermined the ability of the Egyptian state to provide social services to its burgeoning population and has negatively influenced its policies and stance towards refugees. This paper critically examines the situation of education for Sudanese refugees forced to operate in the informal economy due to legal and economic reasons. The paper argues that negative consequences of globalization, particularly the rise in numbers of poor people, further marginalized the position of Sudanese refugees in Cairo as the government became less accommodating to foreigners. It argues that more external funding is needed to ameliorate the dismal conditions of refugees and lessen the burden they exert on the host environment. It critiques the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees urban policy that invariably enforces cuts of assistance to refugees in Cairo, while their economic status remains precarious. The paper focuses on grassroots activities with Sudanese communities in Cairo. It is divided into four parts: (1) the introduction defines the main issues to be discussed; (2) gives an account of the status of the Sudanese in Egypt; (3) examines the issue of educational access to Egyptian schools; and (4) concludes the paper. (Contains 16 notes and 35 references.) (BT)

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Refugee Education in a Changing Global Climate: The Case of Sudanese in Egypt

A paper[1] presented at the
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1. Introduction:

The globalization of neo-liberal economic policies, which is zealously pursued by western nations and lending institutions, is dismantling the welfare state and increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. In particular, the better-known structural adjustment programs (SAP)[2] dictated by The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and The World Bank (WB) have disenfranchised large numbers of people in debt-burdened developing countries and constrained their access to basic services, particularly healthcare and education. Many children in Tanzania cannot attend school because the IMF pressured the government to reverse its policy of free education and introduce education and health fees as part of measures to manage its $ 8 billion debt owed to international creditors (Guardian, February 28, 1999 p. 11). The Tanzanian state's share of education budget declined from 67 per cent, the level before introduction of SAP, to 43 per cent, after adoption of SAP, contributing to a drop in school enrollment from an almost 100 per cent in the 1970s to 83 per cent in 1990 (ADEA, 2002 p. 9). Although its specific consequences for countries are not the same, "structural adjustment envisages the withdrawal of state involvement in economic management and provision of social services, including education." More often than not, members of minority groups, including refugees[3], represent the most disadvantaged people in poor countries forced to decrease investment in education under IMF and WB prodding or due to poverty.

Sudanese refugees in Egypt, mostly settled in Cairo, encounter serious problems, both legal and economic, in accessing education. The most affected are those not recognized as refugees by the UNHCR. Even those recognized as refugees by the UNHCR enjoy limited assistance in facilitating the education of their children. Moreover, refugees are legally barred from work and sending their children to government schools[4] and, hence, live in a truly precarious state. Often, such refugees perceive resettlement in a third country as the only remedy to their predicaments as long as war and massive human rights violations in their country continue. Thus, as British journalist Caroline Moorehead (2002) succinctly points out, "Cairo is a waiting room, a

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[2] SAP have been defined as "one of the essential regulatory and disciplining agencies of globalization…" see Lubeck, Paul L. ( ) Islamic Responses to Globalization. Online:

[3] According to Chaloka Bayeni, the fact that "refugees are usually of different ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identity from the population of the host state generally makes them 'minority' in their countries of asylum…". See Bayeni, Chaloka (1994) "The Prerequisite of Education," in Minority Rights Group International. Education Rights and Minorities, London.

[4] Egypt has decided to permit Sudanese refugee children to attend government schools on the same basis with nationals. However, the 13/12/2000 decision of the Minister of Education, based on Ministerial Decree No. 24 of 1992 which authorized same treatment for Sudanese refugees as Egyptians in primary and secondary education, requires Sudanese to produce birth certificates, last school certificates, identity documents with legal residence and letters from the Sudanese Embassy. The conditions make it hard for refugees, especially the unrecognized, to benefit from the positive policy change.

necessary evil on the way to life." However, some of the dreams for resettlement in a third country will not be realized since countries are becoming more restrictive to movement of peoples and intolerant of refugees. "This unwillingness or incapacity to protect populations is very much connected to the erosion of state authority under the pressures of economic globalisation" (Collinson, p. 25).

Poor countries that have historically kept their borders open to refugees have grown increasingly reluctant to accommodate increasing numbers of forced migrants partly because of economic downturns and associated political problems. More ominous, rich countries, scared of floods of asylum seekers, have erected numerous barriers, including visa restrictions and carrier sanctions, to keep asylum seekers away from their shores. Spain took the unusual step of erecting a $ 12 million fence to bar the entry of North Africans to its territory (Daly, 1998). Such draconian measures do not affect only bogus asylum seekers, as claimed by their enforcers, but also deny *bonafide* refugees access to status determination procedures, and some times subject them to unwarranted *refoulement* or detention.

While waiting for their resettlement dreams to materialize, Sudanese refugees struggle to secure survival livelihoods by engaging in all kinds of activities, mostly illegal, in the informal economy, which is also a refuge for poor Egyptians forced out of the formal economy, in part by economic liberalization policies. In the 1970s, during Anwar Sadat's leadership, Egypt initiated reforms of the state-dominated economy which sparked off "bread riots" against sudden price increases on basic commodities. The reform policies, mired by the public protest, were sluggish and "failed to produce a sustainable growth or generate sufficient employment for the growing labor force"(Badran and Wahby, p.36). In the 1990s, President Mubarak's government agreed to a far-reaching reform of the economy under IMF and WB guidance. However, the implementation of the reforms proceeded slowly, much to the disapproval of donors. It was suggested that in the middle of 1995, the USA gave Egypt a blunt warning that it could no longer prevaricate on structural reforms and expect help from outside (Timewell, 1996 p. 48).

The government's cautious approach to reforms reflected concerns about further impoverishing more of the country's 67 million people. According to official figures, the number of poor people in Egypt increased from 29.7 per cent in 1981-82 to 44 per cent in 1995-96 (Magloff, 1999). Many experts, however, believe the level of poverty is much higher. Roughly 1.6 million Egyptians are unemployed, approximately eight per cent of Egypt's 19 million strong workforce; and on the average 600,000 people enter the job market every year but the economy can hardly create 450,000 jobs annually (Wahish, 2002 p. 13). Some 60 per cent of Egyptians

between the ages 20 and 29 were out of work in 1998 (Bortot, 2002 p. 39). The informal sector supports 2.5 million workers in around 1.5 million "micro" businesses according to figures for 1996 (ibid). Worsened by recent price hikes on essential goods, ranging from 10 to 25 per cent, discontent among the population has increased, and fears of popular unrest, similar to the bread riots of 1977, have heightened (Al Hamalawy, 2002 p. 11).

The poor state of the economy has seriously undermined the ability of the Egyptian State to provide social services to its burgeoning population and has negatively influenced its policies and stance towards refugees. By law, the government limits employment and access to government schools to Egyptians. Changing the law, which is happening in case of access to schools, does not guarantee dramatic improvement in the employment prospects of Sudanese. A research study of Sudanese refugees, found that lack of financial means was the biggest obstacle to sending children to school (Digermans, 2002 p. 19). In fact, legal redress alone, although crucial, might not provide a solution to economic vulnerability. As Black (1992 p. 19) argued that refugees' insecurity in Greece, which legally bar refugees from work, "could be reduced if legal changes were made to allow the right of work to refugees, although it is probable that refugees would continue to be employed in the informal sector." The massive unemployment in Egypt likely will maintain refugees in low status employment niches in the informal economy even after adoption of a favorable legislation. Yet, there is the possibility of enhancing refugee employment if Egypt gives preference to refugees in areas where it engages foreigners. Despite massive unemployment, Egypt employed a few thousand foreigners (The Egyptian Gazette, 2000 p. 2).

Thus, this paper will critically examine the situation of education for Sudanese refugees who are forced to operate in the informal economy due to legal and economic reasons. It argues that the negative consequences of globalisation, particularly the rise in numbers of poor people, have further marginalized the position of Sudanese refugees in Cairo, as the government became less accommodating to foreigners. In addition, it argues that more external funding is needed so as to ameliorate the dismal conditions of refugees and lessen the burden they exert on the host environment. Accordingly, it critiques the UNHCR's Urban policy that invariably enforces cuts of assistance to refugees in Cairo while the economic status of the refugees remains precarious.

This paper is mainly based on grass root activities with Sudanese communities in Cairo. I have been involved in research and human rights activism with southern and western Sudanese

communities in Cairo since 1996. In 1996, I helped set up the Sudan Cultural Digest Project[5] that conducted field studies of Sudanese refugees in Egypt and East Africa and IDPs in southern Sudan. Under this project I carried out research among southern Sudanese communities in Cairo. The study covered numerous issues, including education, and involved individual interviews and focus groups discussions with teachers, clergy and women. Moreover, I have been involved in grassroots activities with Massaleit[6] refugees in Cairo, especially preparing cases of refugee status application and helping create awareness about the massive violations of the human rights of their people back home. Many of the Massaleit in Cairo are young men driven out of school in the Sudan and have a strong desire to continue education in Egypt. They are quite aware of the problems of education in Egypt. I have conducted individual interviews and focus groups discussions with these young people on the issue of education in Egypt. Additionally, my personal experiences in Egypt, where I lived since 1991 as a student and later a refugee, will provide valuable insights for the paper. My initial application for refugee status was denied by the UNHCR, which handles status determination in Egypt. I was finally accepted by the UNHCR on appeal, which was filed with the help of a lawyer. Later, I sought assistance with the education of my children from the Caritas, a Catholic NGO, which implements UNHCR assistance program for refugees. Hence, I am well aware of the psychological pressures that refugees experience in Cairo.

The paper is divided into four parts; the first is the introduction and defines the main issues to be discussed. The second part gives an account of the status of Sudanese in Egypt. It sets out survival livelihoods of recognized and unrecognized refugees in the informal economy. The third part examines the issue of educational access to Egyptian schools, pointing out problems and possibilities. And the last part concludes the paper.

2. Sudanese Refugees Status and Livelihoods:

According to Sperl (2001), the number of Sudanese recognized as refugees was 2,833 at the end of December 2000. About 10,000 had yet to be interviewed by the UNHCR, and some 15,000 had been rejected in the past three years and continued to live in Cairo as illegal aliens. In fact, the actual number of refugees in Cairo should be much higher because large numbers of people

[5] This was a Ford Foundation-funded project affiliated with the Office African Studies at the American University in Cairo which I led. It produced a number of publications, including: Coping with Dynamics of Culture and Change: Sudanese Refugees in East Africa and Internally Displaced Persons in Southern Sudan", which is reviewed in Middle East Studies Association Bulletin, 1999 and is listed in The Brookings-CUNY's Selected Bibliography on the Global Crisis of Internal Displacement.

[6] The Massaleit is one of the African ethnic groups in western Sudan which has recently come under systematic attack by Sudanese government-supported Arab militias. The horrid stories of racist attacks committed by Arab militias and government forces are accessible from http://www.massaleit.com

continued to arrive but few people were leaving.[7]In the first half of 2001 there were 6,244 new arrivals at the UNHCR, which was an unprecedented influx compared to the 8,000 arrivals for the whole of the previous year (Financial Times, 2001). Almost all the refugees lived in Cairo and they formed part of the urban phenomenon described by Kibreab (1996) as "what the eye refuses to see." "Unlike refugees who cross borders balancing belongings on their heads, asylums seekers in Cairo often come with visas. They rent flats and look for work..."(Hauser, 1998 p.14). They virtually disappear into the crowded streets and alleys of Cairo, only reappearing at places where services are offered, such as the UNHCR and Churches.

Sudanese refugees are virtually invisible largely because agencies, especially the UNHCR, have focused on camp refugees in Africa; they formed a small part of the Cairo population; and they constituted a small proportion of Sudanese in Cairo. Egyptians claim that Sudanese number some 5 million people in their country, although an obvious exaggeration but still the true number is huge. Many Sudanese and Egyptians are blood relations, and many more share the same religion and culture. Accordingly, some Sudanese have made cultural inroads into Egyptian society. For example, "Sudanese musicians such as Jawahar, Satouna and Cher Habil regularly hold concerts, perform in weddings and private parties, and appear in local and regional television programs promoting music and culture"(Abdel Moneim, 2001 p. 16). Moreover, Egypt and Sudan enjoyed extensive economic and social relations, for instance in the education field. Egypt used to offer hundreds of scholarships to Sudanese students to learn in its institutions up until 1990, at which time the educational benefits to new students were cancelled in retaliation for Sudanese government's expulsion of all Egyptian teachers from its territory (ibid p. 17). Furthermore, Egyptians claim that even though Sudanese cannot legally work and send their children to government schools, "they are not automatically barred from finding a livelihood."[8]However, this is particularly true when relations between the two governments are cordial and the restrictive legislations are ignored or applied sporadically. The experience of Afghan refugees in India, which has not acceded to the 1951 Convention, explains the role of politics in mediating the status of refugees forced to eke out a living in a prohibitive legal environment. According to Obi and Crisp (2000), "although these refugees were formally barred from seeking work or establishing a small business, the authorities usually turned a blind eye to those who did." However, the election of a government less tolerant to foreigners generally, and to Afghans in particular, and increasing public hostility because of the alleged involvement of Afghans in the Kashmir conflict, led to the stringent application of the 1946 Foreigners Act. Consequently, Afghans experienced "growing number of protection problems,

[7] After the September 11 attack on the USA, there has been a noticeable drop in resettlement activities, which used to take significant numbers of refugees out of Cairo.

[8] See Spiller, Penny (1999) "What refuge: from war?" Egypt's Insight Volume 3, Number 6, 29-31

including detention by security agencies and harassment by the local population."

The livelihoods of Sudanese in Egypt in general, and of refugees in particular, are substantially affected by the nature of political relations between the two countries in question. Before European imperialists demarcated the borders in Africa, Sudan was united with Egypt, itself a colonized country. Mohamad Ali, the Ottoman ruler of Egypt occupied Sudan in 1821 to secure slaves, ivory and gold. This initial Egyptian colonial regime was brought to an end in 1885 by the Maddiya, a messianic movement, which routed the Egyptian army. With the help of the British, the Egyptians reestablished some influence in Sudan through a colonial power sharing arrangement called the Anglo-Egyptian condominium. Nonetheless, Egyptian nationalists worked hard to free themselves from British colonial yoke and fully colonize the Sudan. According to Powell (1995 p. 29), to these nationalists, Sudanese were not the "Other" but the "Self" not quite grown up, not yet evolved." Moreover, this author explains that the then Egyptian nationalists depicted Sudanese as "servants and slaves" in their cultural productions. Even though the Maddiya movement defeated the Egyptians and the Sudanese people brushed aside Egypt's enthusiasm for unity, some of these demeaning attitudes might have persisted in Egypt subconscious, surfacing when relations between the two countries prove tense. Sudanese, especially the dark-skinned, are subjected to harassment and humiliation by Egyptians on the streets, with increasing frequency when tensions are running high between the two countries. Partly, because of Sudanese marginal status in the Arab world,

> The northern Sudanese elite, through their narrow interpretation of Sudanese national identity has played up Sudan's Arab and Islamic heritage to the detriment of other histories even those emanating from north central Sudan such as its Nubian Christian past (Fabos, 2001 p. 179).

The common bonds between Egypt and Sudan, both Arab countries with long shared history, and the fact that the citizens of both countries could enter and live in each other's country with ease, has been used to deny claims for refugee status in Egypt. Bajor (1997 p. 159) asserts that the overwhelming majority of the Sudanese in Egypt, who are not recognized as refugees, are given the status of 'second citizens'. Egypt uses the Nile Valley (Waadi el Nil) Treaty, signed in 1978, and the Charter of Integration Between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Democratic Republic of Sudan, signed in 1982, to justify the designation of Sudanese as "second citizens" (Zaki, 1982). The Charter entitled citizens of both countries residency, travel and employment rights in each other's country.

Hence, Sudanese had to struggle to secure assistance from the UNHCR. In 1994, more than 400

southern Sudanese women demonstrated at the UNHCR compound to protest against the government and UNHCR for denying Sudanese refugees status. These women were beaten and denied medical treatment by the Egyptian police, something they wrote letters of protest to world leaders about, to the dismay of the Egyptian government and the UNHCR.[9] Nonetheless, the bases for denying Sudanese refugee status in Egypt were eroded when political relations between Hosni Mubarak's and Omer el Bashir's governments worsened. Perhaps most damaging to bilateral ties, was the 1995 failed assassination attempt on Hosni Mubarak in Addis-Ababa, for which the fundamentalist leaders of Sudan, who assumed power in a military coup in 1989, were accused of masterminding. Egypt imposed visa and residency requirements on Sudanese at the formal level, and the life of Sudanese on the Egyptian streets became much difficult at the informal level. Admittedly, this was the lowest drop in relations, but nonetheless it falls within a consistent pattern of regression in relations between the two countries.[10] The consequence of this trend was the rising resentment of Sudanese refugees. A typical case of hardening of attitudes of the hosts to Sudanese is narrated by Cooper (1992 p. 23):

> The first question usually asked of a prospective tenant frequently concerns the individual's nationality. Sometimes the refugee is asked directly if they were Sudanese, a question revealing the prejudice which exists among many in Egypt against people from Sudan; and one which, the refugees suspect, would quite likely be met with a refusal to rent, were the answer to be in the affirmative

The experience of xenophobia further alienated Sudanese refugees and diminished credibility of the notion of "oneness" of the Egyptian and Sudanese peoples.

The fact that southern Sudanese agitated for refugee status can be understood by taking stock of their marginal status in the host society and in the Sudanese society in Egypt. It should be noted that out of the claimed 5 million Sudanese in Egypt, predominantly from northern Sudan, only a few thousands persons have actively sought refugee status. Generally, northern Sudanese have been slow in seeking refugee status, at least initially. Perhaps, this might be explained by the fact that the special ties between Sudan and Egypt meant much to them, and they could establish livelihoods much more easily than southern Sudanese. In fact, the educated among Northern Sudanese have established extensive networks, which they draw upon. As the case of Palestinian refugees in Kuwait illustrate, social networks are crucial in reestablishing livelihoods of dislocated people (Ghabra, 1988). The exiled northern Sudanese in Cairo drew on

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[9] See Sudan Democratic Gazette (1994) "Southern Sudanese women tell of ordeal at Cairo", Number 55, December.
[10] See Fabos, Anita (2001) "Ambiguous Borders, Ambivalent Citizens: Being Sudanese in 20th Century Egypt", In May Ann Fay (ed) Auto/Biography in the Middle East. London and New York: St. Martin's Press.

their social connections, education and experience to set up NGOs which generated them income and sustenance (Sharif, 1996). Moreover, these NGOs used southern Sudanese in low status positions and often to create a mirage of inclusiveness, which is good for funds shopping. In reality they reproduced the very inequalities and marginalization that fuel the frustration, rebelliousness, and war back home. Partly, because of lack of social capital and other resources enjoyed by northerners, southerners have failed to established comparable livelihoods and, hence, were compelled to seek support from UNHCR.[11]

Also, differences in culture and politics serve to marginalize southern Sudanese in Cairo. Northern Sudanese share a common Arab culture and Islamic religion, but southern Sudanese are Africans and mostly Christians. Moreover, northern Sudanese, at least at the moment, are not a threat to Egyptian influence in the Sudan. However, southern Sudanese are viewed as a potential problem because of their armed struggle for self-determination and possibly full independence for southern Sudan, which Egypt perceives as a threat to its access to the Nile.

In May 2000, when the SPLM/A leader, Dr. John Garang De Mabior, visited Egypt, southern Sudanese refugees were hunted from the streets, apartments and Churches by the police, detained, and taken up to Aswan for deportation to Sudan. The deportation was halted by the reported intervention of Dr. Garang De Mabior with the Egyptian authorities. The one-month residency of the victims had expired, which is only normal for Sudanese as renewal of permits is nearly impossible. What was odd was the peculiar interest of the Egyptian police in southern Sudanese at a time when Dr. Garang De Mabior was visiting with Egyptian leaders. One prevalent rumor had it that the southern Sudanese were harassed because the Egyptians wanted to show Dr. Garang De Mabior what could happen to his fellow countrymen and women if he continued to pay mere lip service to the Egyptian-Libyan peace plan[12] for Sudan (Apiku, 2000).

Some of the victims were picked up while going to or returning from work. Those who were not arrested had to stay home to avoid the same fate, with devastating impacts for their livelihoods. My neighbor, Christopher Tombe, a young southern Sudanese from Lokoya ethnic group, was arrested in Zamalek area where he works in the home of a rich Egyptian. He was thrown into Khalifa prison but later was released. Tombe was waiting for status determination interview at the UNHCR but the organization, whose essential mandate encompasses protection, never came

[11] See, Coleman, J (1990) 'Social Capital' Chapter 12, in Foundations of Social Science Theory, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press: 300-321.

[12] The Egyptian-Libyan peace plan envisages a reconciliation of the parties to the Sudanese conflict without recognizing self-determination for the southern Sudan. It is a rival to the much older peace plan sponsored by the Inter-Government Authority for Development (IGAD) which includes the right to self-determination for the people of southern Sudan.

to his rescue. It takes between about two years for an applicant to have his first interview at the UNHCR. Another young man from western Sudan was picked up while selling goods on the streets and spent time in jail. Other vendors laid low and lost the opportunity of earning their upkeep.

Legally, refugees cannot work because Egypt reserved on the article of the 1951 Convention recognizing the right of work of refugees. Refugees had to turn to the informal economy where they were disadvantaged because of cultural difference and language barriers in some cases.[13] Only women could find house keeping or childcare jobs, which are low status but relatively better paying compared to employments open to men. Most men remain idle and suffer status loss in the home.

Few other sources of income for Sudanese refugees exist. The UNHCR, which is held in low regard by Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees (Cooper, 1995) and Sudanese refugees (Sudan Cultural Digest Project, 1996), offers some humanitarian assistance, through Caritas, to the select few it considers refugees. Furthermore, All Saints Church and St. Andrews Church offer medical and other services to refugees who have been denied protection by the UNHCR. Sacred Heart Church also extends some assistance to the refugees.

Moreover, the USA, Australian and Canadian embassies run resettlement programs for refugees referred by the UNHCR. However, these humanitarian activities are small scale and poorly coordinated. Another prominent weakness is that the programs are targeted to families with children. Single young man, who are assumed by the UNHCR Urban policy to be capable of standing alone, are left out or poorly represented in the distribution of services by institutions. This is especially serious since many young people were forced to flee by the system of forced conscription into the Sudanese war. In Cairo, they ·d in a state of limbo[14].

3. Sudanese Refugees Access to Education.

The importance of education for refugees cannot be overemphasized. This is especially the case for the many Sudanese youth forced to leave school because of violations of human rights and

[13] Social relations are very important in Egypt. Some small businesses operated through relations of blood and friendship.

[14] In the past few years, a number of southern Sudanese, who had come to Egypt to study, threw themselves of the windows of apartment buildings to death. Some of these youth had completed their studies but elected to remain in Cairo as illegal aliens in precarious circumstances.

fear of forcible conscription into Sudanese government's Popular Defense Forces.[15] A student who completes secondary school education in Sudan cannot access his final results until he completes national defense training, which can include active duty at the frontline. Conditions in the training camps are reportedly dismal. In April 1998, a group of students, fearing relocation to the frontline in the South, fled one of the training camps around Khartoum and tried to swim across the Nile. More than fifty of them drown or died of gunshots received from pursuing camp guards (African News Online, 1998). Some of the survivors joined the people escaping to Egypt. Invariably, Sudanese youth fleeing persecution face a tough time resuming education. Also, families encounter lots of problems providing an educational for their children. Due to this crisis in the Sudanese community, Churches have set up educational programs to fill the void created by lack of or inadequate services by the international organizations mandated to deal with education for refugees.

The organization most blamed for the crisis in the Sudanese community is the UNHCR. A major complain about the UNHCR regards its status determination procedures. It takes almost two years for an applicant for refugee status to access status determination procedures, and the process itself is rife with incompetence. During the waiting time, the applicant is unassisted. He has to find a school for himself or family members, which is a daunting task. The biggest impediment is that Egyptian schools require residency permits, which most Sudanese do not have after the expiry of the one-month residency granted on arrival in Egypt. It is almost impossible to renew residency permits and, hence, Sudanese do not attempt to approach the Egyptian immigration department. Only those recognized as refugees by the UNHCR are given residency permits, of normally three months subject to renewal.

The UNHCR assesses refugee claims on the basis of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which Egypt acceded to in 1981 with reservations on article 12(1) (personal status), article 20 (rationing), article 22(1)(public education), article (23) (public relief), and article (24)(labor and social security). Although Egypt has acceded to the 1969 OAU refugee Convention, which offers broader grounds for refugee status, the UNHCR does not apply this regional refugee legal instrument in refugee status determination. The few refugees who gain refugee status are issued with cards, a system which came into operation in 1998. Before this system was introduced, even persons recognized as refugees get arrested and the UNHCR intervened on frequent basis to avoid *refoulement*.

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[15] This is the government militia force purportedly comprised of volunteers. In reality, civil servants, students and other people are coerced to join. It fights alongside the government army in a war the Sudanese Islamic fundamentalist rulers describe as a *jihad* or Islamic holy war against infidels.

Applicants who fail to satisfy a UNHCR interviewer are denied refugee status and are allowed to appeal the decision within one month. It takes ten months for an appeal case to reach interview stage and the chances for recognition as a refugee are 45 to 50 per cent, according to a UNHCR official. If an appeal case is denied, the file of the applicant is closed, and there are almost no chances that it will be reopened. Sometimes appeal applications are denied without interview. Refugees with closed files are the most vulnerable individuals because they are forced into a life of perpetual illegality in Cairo. Apart from limited help from Churches, they entirely survive through employment in the informal economy. Because of the poorly paid, demeaning and scarce jobs in Egypt, many refugees do not try to find employments. Often, women shoulder the responsibility of families since they can get better paying jobs than men, which is associated with significant gender roles changes in homes (Sudan Cultural Digest Project, 1998). Refugee with closed files face harder times in accessing education.

The UNHCR is bound to support the basic education of persons recognized as refugees. Article 22 of the 1951 Convention states that "The Contracting Parties shall accord to refugees the same right that it accords to nationals with respect to elementary education." In Cairo, the UNHCR assistance is provided through Caritas, a Catholic NGOs, which has a long tradition of serving poor people in Egypt. Unfortunately, assistance has suffered from retrenchment of the budget of the UNHCR. Sperl (2000 p.14) found that the total Care and Maintenance (CM/2001) budget for Cairo office decline between 1997 and 2001 from US $ 2.34 million to US$ 1.49 million when the number of refugees assisted at that time increased from 4,000 to 5,000. He calculated that, setting aside 10 per cent of the budget for support services, "the average expenditure per refugee per year decreased from US$ 500 to US$ 290 which amounted to a reduction of no less than 42%." He added that the result on refugees had been dramatic:

> Standard rates of assistance to refugees have been lowered significantly and the reimbursement of medical expenses has been halved; in the course of the year 2000 educational assistance had to be frozen for long periods and vocational training was discontinued altogether. Refugee families are facing eviction from their premises due to non-payment of rent, children have ceased to go to school or will be barred from taking exams unless they pay their fee; the chronically ill can no longer afford their medication…

With more people arriving in Cairo and ending in a state of limbo, the general situation of Sudanese refugees continued to deteriorate. Khamis, a teacher, narrated a sad case of a

Sudanese pupil at the Church school where he teaches. The pupil's mother works *mobit*[16] in the home of an Egyptian but the pay is too low to afford the full cost of her son's transportation to school. Because the pupil is determined not to join the multitudes already going without any education, he tries to take free rides to school. Some Egyptian drivers are harsh and throw him out of public transportation means once discovered. He waits to board another public means, and hopes that the driver will be more sympathetic. Many times, he finds kind drivers who allow him to complete the trip to school but he reaches too late to catch the early morning lessons. Return home, follows the same grueling pattern. However, most children in similar conditions are not intrepid enough to follow such survival techniques and choose to stay home until funds become available.

The children not recognized as refugees by the UNHCR are unassisted despite the fact that Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which Egypt has signed, required that "all children have a right to primary and secondary education of all types, including general and vocational education." Thus, in the 2000 report of the Joint Relief Ministry, the relief wing of the All Saints Cathedral and St. Andrews Church in Cairo, stated that more than 3000 children were out of school (Joint Relief Ministry, 2000). Interestingly, Dingermans, (2002 p. 2) finds no clear difference between school enrollments for recognized and unrecognized refugees, and it may be added that this is partly because legal residence and formal access to schools do not guarantee that learners will enter Egyptian schools.

In 1992, the Egyptian government decided to adopt a Ministerial Decree No. 24 of 1992 that allowed several categories of students, including Sudanese, to enroll in Egyptian schools on the same conditions with Egyptian students. However, following the 1995 assassination attempt on President Mubarak, Sudanese were removed from the beneficiary categories of the decree. This privilege was restored on 13 December 2000 by a Minister of Education decision. However, the decree imposes a lot of conditions, such as the need for legal residency, which undermines its worth to Sudanese, especially those not recognized as refugees. Besides, access to Egyptian schools is not only a legal issue; there are many other hurdles to sending children to Egyptian schools.

Education in Egypt is in a messy state. Decades of lack of investment and surging population have exerted an enormous drain on the educational system. Not surprisingly, since the decreeing of universal free education, adult literacy is estimated to be only 50 per cent. Women in the rural areas have even lower literacy rates. Moreover, poverty, on the increase, weighs heavily

[16] *Mobit* is the term southern Sudanese used for live-in housemaids. Normally, the maid only has one free day in a week. Mothers are forced to take this kind of jobs with serious consequences for children.

over many of the people, and measures to reform the economy are exacerbating the situation.

> One change that the Egyptians are not proud of is that their poor are getting even poorer. This in itself is not remarkable; the pain of the first years of economic reform is accepted as inevitable phase in the arduous climb to better and brighter future. But not all the obstacles that badly off Egyptians confront in the climb are transitional (Economist, 1999)

For example, the economy is based on sectors, like tourism, that are susceptible to dramatic changes from external sources that the country has no control over. The September 2001 attack on the USA terribly hit tourism, causing a huge loss of revenue and the need for a bailout of the economy by international donors. Hence, the gloomy outlook of the economy means investments in the educational sector will not be realized to the level appropriate.

The schools are overflowing with students despite government's commitment to improve conditions. Most schools operate more than one shift to accommodate more students. "The rate of pupils to teachers in public schools is 45 to one. Some city schools pack 100 children to a room. With school-age population of 16m, even the respective 6% of GDP spent on education mean only $200 a year per pupil" (Economist, 1997). Students cannot adequately get the attention of teachers who are more concerned with giving private tutoring to top up their meager salaries. The cost of education, supposedly free, is estimated to consume 10 per cent of average family income per child in a year (ibid).

The messy state of public education in Egypt hinders refugee access to schools. One possibility is to turn to private schools, which requires a refugee to have sufficient resources. Where a refugee has money he can avoid some of the shortfalls in public schooling to some extent. For example Grace, a southern Sudan woman who used to work for the Danish Embassy in Khartoum and whose husband works for the IOM in Cairo, sends her small daughter to a private Christian kinder garden and pays 200 Egyptian pounds per month. However, a typical refugee cannot afford the fees demanded by private schools since he makes small incomes in the informal sector. Moreover, rising prices of goods, hastened by economic reforms, weakens his purchasing power.

The places Sudanese refugees turn to are Church-run educational centers, which initially may have begun as programs to cater to the educational needs of the children of Churchgoers. Except for one center, which limits enrolment to Christian children, these centers are open to all Sudanese and other refugees. Some people have complained, seemingly without good reasons,

that these schools are only accessible to non-Christian southern Sudanese. Clearly, most of these schools will not turn away refugees due to religious reasons. It is worth noting that southern Sudanese Muslims have no qualms about sending their children to these schools.

It seems the educational approach of these centers is based on a long Christian tradition of serving communities in distress, in some countries including proselytizing. However, it is forbidden to proselytize in Egypt. The center that excludes Muslim children justifies the decision on the ground that its activities may be mistaken for proselytism. Unfortunately, detractors of Church schools may take this as evidence of discrimination.

Such complains about the roles of Church-run education are not limited to Cairo. In parts of the world where religious intolerance is rife, some people in positions of authority have displayed ambivalent attitudes towards Church schools. Often, leaders speak harshly against these schools but yet continue to tolerate their presence and in some cases continue to send their children to them. Sudan, which has established a reputation for its intolerance to non-Muslims, allows the Catholic Church to operate some of the best educational institutions in the country. Also, in the predominantly Hindu Gujarat state of India, where sectarian violence is common, there are lots of complains about Church schools, but Hindu nationalist leaders continue to send their children to them. "Most parents, after all, want a good education for their children, what ever their politics, be they poor or rich, Hindu, Muslim or Christian" (Dugger, 1999 p. 5). Not surprisingly, Churches play a big role in the education of this State's elite and increasingly its most disadvantaged low-caste and tribal children.

In Cairo, the Sacred Heart Catholic Church at Abassiya, which is a prayer place mostly for southern Sudanese, pioneered educational programs for refugee children. It now runs a full-pledged educational program for over 1000 between 4 to 18 year-olds. About 700 of them are in primary school and 300 are in intermediate school. It operates morning and evening sessions in ten classrooms for primary pupils, and has three rooms for intermediate students. The medium of instruction is Arabic but English is taught as a lesson. From primary three to five, pupils are supposed to take Egyptian examinations but many do not because of lack of residency permit, a requirement. Hence, the school sets its own examinations for internal promotion of those not allowed to take standard examinations.

Due to rising demand for services, the Church has established satellite centers in two places where the population of refugees is substantial. One such center is operating at Arbaa Wy Nus, a shantytown, by the name St. Bakheta Educational Center for Displaced and Refugee Children. The following table offers a glimpse of the type of Sudanese refugees in basic education in

Egypt.

The Statistics of Pupils at St. Bakheta Educational Center for Displaced and Refugee Children in Arbaa Wy Nus, 2002:

Classes	Students	Christian	Muslim	Boys	Girls
Kindergarten	42	40	02	22	20
Nursery	49	47	02	25	24
1A	40	37	03	23	17
1B	30	27	03	14	16
1C	50	49	01	28	22
2A	32	30	02	24	08
2B	29	26	03	13	16
3	34	24	10	18	16
4	44	37	07	24	20
5	33	24	09	23	10
Total	383	341	42	214	169

Sources: Based on interview with a teacher at the school on 31 January 2002.

According to responses to interview questions by the teacher, three quarters of the pupils are Dinka. The other students come from Nuba, Nuer, Bari speaking- groups, Didinga and Arabs (4 only). The total number of teachers is 13, and pupils is 383, of which 214 are male. The school charges each pupil 30 Egyptian pounds, which is paid by Caritas incase of recognized refugees. The main reasons mentioned for lack of access to government schools are the illegal status of most refugees and "fear of children being harassed by Egyptian children."

Fear of Egyptians is serious matter given that xenophobia against southern Sudanese has been on the rise. The worst incident of anti-southern Sudanese sentiment was displayed when a motor vehicle accident on 24 July 2000 that injured a southern Sudanese pedestrian turned ugly. Nearly 400 Sudanese were barricaded in the Sacred Heart Church compound while nearly 800 local Egyptians, chanting *Al Allahu Akbar* (God is Great), threw molokov cocktails at them and burnt to ashes one vehicle belonging to the Church (Apiku, 2000). The Egyptian police claimed Sudanese had abducted the driver and the assistant of the vehicle that hit the southern Sudanese, and that the local Egyptians were trying to rescue them from within the Church compound. Contrarily, the southern Sudanese and priests at the Church said the Sudanese were sheltering from hostile mobs that wanted to break into the Church. The consequence of the tragic event is the permanent posting of policemen to guard the Church entrance.

The atmosphere of hostility perhaps greatly affected Sudanese youth who are less likely to put up with xenophobia. Obviously, this affects their ability to maneuver within the host

community. Their problems are compounded by the difficulty of fitting into employment niches in the informal economy because of lack of social contacts. Research has shown that entry into employments in the informal economy in Africa is determined by such factors as personal contacts, network of clients, access to capital more than experience or skill (Wallace, 1986). Hence, the youth are marginalized in employment and in refugee assistance programs, which view unmarried single males as self-sufficient.

4. Conclusion:

Globalization policies are increasingly creating losers in the poor countries of the world. In particular, structural adjustments that are forced upon poor countries by rich nations and international institutions have disenfranchised many people and severely constrained their access to basic services like healthcare and education. Refugees, who are mostly hosted by poor countries, have been among the severely marginalized people in terms of access to education and other basic services. The paper examines the case of Sudanese refugees in Egypt, which is cautiously opening its economy to the outside world under pressure from donor nations and international institutions.

Because of retrenchment policies that characterized economic reform programs, initiated in the 1970s, Egypt's ability to provide education to its burgeoning population has been on the decline. As a consequence, many people are out of the formal economy and are forced to gain sustenance in the informal economy. More people have been forced below the poverty level since reforms started. The removal of subsidies has severely affected the livelihoods of Egyptians. For example, "some 30 % of all young people are "stunted", or too short for their age, up from 25 % in the early 1990s. The problem is worst in the rural Upper Egypt (i.e., southern Egypt) where 40% of the children are stunted, many of them severely" (Economist, 1999). Because of this hostile economic and social environment, the Egyptian government has adopted a restrictive stance to the Sudanese refugees within its borders. Moreover, shifting bilateral relations between Egypt and Sudan impacts on the status of Sudanese refugees.

Sudanese refugees are not allowed to work and, except for those recognized by the UNHCR as refugees, live illegally in Egypt. Consequently, they are compelled to compete in the informal sector with poor Egyptians. However, their lack of social capital means they cannot compete well in the informal economy. Thus, their livelihoods are rendered precarious. It is only the women who can serve as domestic employees and earn some reasonable amounts compared to the men folk. Moreover, humanitarian assistance is targeted to children and families, missing out the youth. The young people are unable to access educational facilities in Egypt.

Education of Sudanese refugees is almost left to the Church-run educational centers. The UNHCR support has dwindled over the years and recognized refugees found their status varying little with the unrecognized refugees with regard to access to basic services. Both of these groups encountered problems with the enrolment of their children in Egyptian schools, even though legally they are allowed. The result is that many refugees found their children driven out of school. There is no significant difference between the enrolment of the recognized and unrecognized refugees. However, the prospects of return to school of the children of recognized refugees are better because they have the chance to resettle in the West. After September 11 and with rising numbers of refugees, that durable solution may become more elusive in the future, though.

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